



## Short Safety Subject

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### Allergies, Antihistamines And Drowsiness



Spring is here! It is time to put away the heavy coats and break out the sunglasses. But the weather conditions that lead to "spring fever" also give rise to another affliction that affects many of us - hay fever.

Hay fever can make those who are sensitive to pollen miserable, interfering with work and play. Fortunately, modern medicine has developed drugs which give temporary relief from hay fever's common symptoms. As users of antihistamines and decongestants know, however, there are side affects to these over-the-counter drugs. The side affect most often experienced is drowsiness.

A Gallup survey of allergy sufferers was conducted several years ago. This survey found that the package warnings against driving or operating machinery while taking the medicine are largely ignored. If you think about it, this shouldn't be surprising - since people take the medication so that they *can* continue with their normal activities, and they attempt to do so.

We hope that you will be aware of the drowsiness problem and watch out for it while working or driving. However, this is not always the case. A research team conducted an allergy workshop and concluded that most workers who are trying to control their allergies with over-the-counter drugs are not aware that they are sedated. In addition to feeling drowsy, other side affects of being sedated are reduced coordination, slowed reaction time and impaired judgment. These may be even less recognizable than drowsiness, but any of this can happen when your not fully alert. The use of allergy medication can also effect your ability to focus on the work to be done by causing dizziness, nervousness, nausea or headaches.

You must be alert at all times and able to react to production issues, recognize safety hazards, and be an asset. So what can be done to reduce the discomfort of hay fever season, yet keep you effective at work? The following tips may be helpful:

Consider taking the medication for only significant allergy attacks.

- If you need the medicine, take the smallest dose possible that will still provide a level of relief that you need.

- Before taking the medication, read not only the warnings on the outer package, but also the product insert. This small piece of paper, with equally small print, usually has much more detailed information about the product and possible side effects.
- Follow the recommended dosage. More is not necessarily better. Taking "extra doses" may only provide more side effects - and not more relief.

Finally, if you have any questions about allergy medication, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Some products may be less troublesome than others. Spring allergies can be very uncomfortable, but an accident or injury could bring an even *greater* problem into your life.